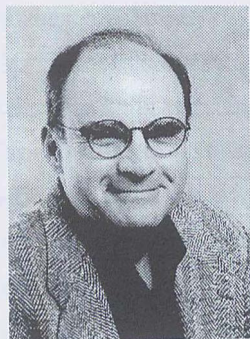


# Food and Drink:

## The declining importance of cultural context?



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When we pop open a can of Coca Cola or reach into a bag of potato chips, we are most-likely consuming a product available to consumers in many locations across the globe and made of ingredients produced in multiple countries. While food and drink remain an integral part of cultural practices and identities today, very few of the products we purchase at the supermarket or in chain restaurants are actually local. What processes have contributed to the seemingly limitless availability of out-of-season produce, the global spread of name-brand food and drink, and the prominence of low cost 'convenience' foods and fast food restaurants in cities across the globe?

There is no question that national and 'local' social structures and cultures continue to be important throughout the world. Similarly, today's global citizens continue to have agency through which they make an array of choices and, more importantly, construct their social and cultural worlds. In other words, the dialectics between culture and agency (Archer, 1988), and structure and agency (Giddens, 1984) continue to be of great importance. This is true globally, as well as nationally and locally.

While we acknowledge all of that, much of the senior author's (Ritzer, 2013; 2007) work is focused on the idea that these dialectics have been greatly affected by a variety of global forces which have been either set in motion, or greatly amplified, since the end of WW II. In this essay we will focus on how these changes affect food and drink. Among other things, we will argue that those changes have tended to both expand and reduce social and cultural differences in food and drink throughout much of the world. This perspective is in line with Giddens's argument that larger structural and cultural changes are both enabling and constraining. On the one hand, many people around the world now have access to a wider variety of food and drink than they ever had before (Belasco, 2008). For example, products and brands once limited to local markets are available globally, allowing consumers in the global North to eat tomatoes and peaches, grown in warmer climates, year-round. On the other hand, many of the changes associated with globalization detailed in this essay have served to limit, at least in some ways, individual choice in food and drink consumption. The increasing dominance of multi-national corporations in the production and marketing of food and drink products threatens smaller-scale, locally-based products, production and consumption practices in developing countries, changing not only what is available, but how it is consumed (Wilk, 2006). The availability of what we consider today to be the most essential food commodities – coffee and sugar, for example – is directly tied to the political and economic forces associated with global capitalism (Mintz, 1986). More generally, these forces tend to greatly alter, if not undermine, the social, cultural and agential dialectics that existed in the realm of food and drink prior to their ascendancy.

What are these forces? First, there is globalization (Ritzer, 2010; 2012), which we define here as 'a transplanetary process or set of processes involving increasing liquidity and the growing multidirectional flows of people, objects, places and information as well as the structures they encounter and create that are barriers to, or expedite, those flows' (Ritzer, 2010: 2). It is possible to trace globalization back thousands of years, or at least several centuries, and there are many different views on the beginnings of globalization. We will adopt the view here that what we now think of as globalization can be traced to the end of the end of World War II. Many other changes after the war – for example, the fall of the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc – contributed to globalization and its expansion, but we will take the end of WW II as a watershed in the history of globalization.

The emergence of a second important force – Americanization – can be thought of as the spread of a particular type of globalization involving largely one-way flows from the US rather than the multi-directional flows that define globalization in general (Kuisel, 1993; Crothers, 2010). Like globalization, Americanization can be seen as pre-dating WW II (for example, US entry into WW I in 1917), although the former significantly pre-dates America's rise as a global superpower. America's dominant role in WW II spurred the process of Americanization as other major world powers were either decimated by the war and/or mired in communist regimes which greatly hindered economic development (see Vogel [2011] on Mao's responsibility for destroying the Chinese economy in the 1950s and 1960s and Deng's role, beginning in the late 1970s, in its current efflorescence). America's increasing power coincided with increasing globalization. The US and its corporations took advantage of structural and cultural changes to further enrich their wealth and influence. While globalization is inherently multi-directional, the hegemony of the US meant that in the second half of the 20th century more information, products, and services flowed out of its borders than in. As a result of this imbalance, monetary flows poured into the US making it by far the richest country in the world. Today, this economic predominance is on the wane. Massive amounts of money now flow out of the US, especially to China, which is on the rise as a competitor and becoming the probable successor to the US (Naughton, 2006).



Nevertheless, the imprint of Americanization, especially in terms of culture, continues to manifest itself and remain strong in many parts of the world (Antonio & Bonnano, 2000).

A third force is the rise of consumer society (Baudrillard, 1970/1998; Galbraith, 1958). Pre-existing infrastructure allowed the US to rapidly expand its production facilities after WW II, and production dominated the American economy, fueled by demand from other parts of the world which needed to rebuild their factories. As wealth flowed into the country, the focus began to shift in the US, especially in the wake of wartime deprivations, in the direction of consumption. Accelerating consumption in ensuing decades, what Baudrillard (1970/1998) later heralded as the arrival of 'consumer society', meant that the US quickly became the world leader in consumption even as its industrial base was showing the first signs of the decline (the emergence of the 'rust belt'). The US compensated for increasing industrial decline at the transition of the 20th and 21st centuries by both expanding consumer society within its borders and by exporting much of it (shopping malls [Ritzer, 2010], credit cards [Ritzer, 1995], iPhones and iPads) to the rest of the world. Thus, American consumer culture, exported by the US and in many cases eagerly embraced outside its borders, is central to the global impact of Americanization in general.

At a more abstract level, the fourth force is the expansion and global proliferation of the process of rationalization, through which economies and their components strive for greater efficiency and productivity (Weber, 1921/1968). The rise of rationalized production is another domain in which the US took the lead following WW II. Early on, US advances were in realm of production: for example, Ford's automobile assembly line, Taylor's scientific management of labor, Sloan's divisional system at General Motors, automation, robotization, and so on. However, as production began to decline in the late 1940s and 1950s, companies began to shift their focus to the rationalization, or 'McDonaldization' (Ritzer, 1993; 2013), of consumption. The significance of the McDonald's model was the fact that it adopted rational principles – efficiency, calculability, predictability and control – from the factory and brought them into the consumption-focused setting of the fast-food restaurant. From

there, the application of these principles expanded into many other consumption sites, as well as virtually every other sector of society including the church (Drane, 2001/2008) and education (Hayes and Wynyard, 2002). Like Americanization, rationalization and McDonaldization are global processes. Both McDonald's and, more importantly, its principles, have been widely exported: McDonald's alone has locations in around 120 countries throughout the world, and McDonaldized processes are increasingly popular within and beyond the global food industry.

Finally, and at least in some eyes most importantly, is the expansion of capitalism, especially with the demise of what once seemed to be a viable alternative – communism. As Marx detailed early on, capitalism must continuously expand or die (1884/1991): once it has begun to exhaust opportunities to grow within a given country, it turns outward and seeks to expand globally (Harvey, 2001). In the post WW II era, the US was the leading capitalist society in the world. At first, giant American production companies, so powerful that Servan-Schreiber (1968) worried that they were overwhelming European competitors, sought to spread their market-dominance throughout the globe. But American industry was already beginning to decline and the American capitalist system was beginning to shift its focus to the domain of consumption: after first concentrating on expansion in the US, American companies (very successfully) shifted their sights to the global market.

What does all of this mean for food and drink at a global level? While there certainly remains great variation in food and drink around the world, perhaps even greater variation with the addition of globalized products to local consumption traditions, the aforementioned processes also contribute to varying levels of global homogenization in these domains. When it comes to food and drink, there is no single, nor simple, relationship between the global and the local: this is a realm in which national identity may be constructed in relation to increasing global influence and where global and local interact not as polar opposites, but as interrelated forces (Wilk, 2006). However, it seems likely that those homogenizing, global elements will continue to expand in the future further reducing in significance, but certainly not eliminating, local food and drink.

Let us look at each of the forces mentioned above and what they mean for global food and drink. Central to the operating definition of globalization is the increasing fluidity, or increasing mobility, of almost everything, including food and drink, and the increasing degree to which they flow throughout the world in all directions (Ritzer 2010: 2). In this context, the global food industry can be described in terms of the decreasing association of specific origins with specific foods, increasing interaction and dispersion of food cultures, and the decline of barriers that exist to certain flows of food products, foodways, and modes of production. This definition of globalization allows us to consider how the availability and popularity of commodities like sugar (Mintz, 1986) and bananas (Koeppel, 2008) are linked to the expansion and spread of global superpowers; once considered in terms of national dominance on the global market, food and drink are increasingly controlled by powerful multinational corporations. Among the most notable examples today are Chilean fruits and vegetables, New Zealand lamb, Australian beef, coffee from many parts of the world, and many of the industrialized, brand-name foods and drinks, often American in origin, to be discussed below.

However, the definition of globalization also highlights the importance of barriers to global flows, which are especially important to consider in the case of food and drink. Perhaps the most important barrier to the global homogenization of food and drink is the continuation of the importance of local (and individual) tastes and traditions. Such tastes go to the heart of many cultures and are therefore highly likely to be adhered to and protected from flows of global food and drink. Dietary restrictions associated with religious or cultural traditions include not only what people consume (such as limitations on the consumption of pork or alcohol), but how some food and drink are produced (guidelines for the slaughter of animals and the separation of certain foods from others). Further, the mere availability of new, global products does not necessarily imply that food habits will shift to include them to a significant effect. While consumers may try these products as a treat or novelty, their everyday consumption practices may be harder for global products to infiltrate. Traditions such as meals (number of times per day, size of meals, when certain foods are to be consumed, etc.), the feeding of children (what babies



and children are to eat early in their lives), and the historical availability of certain staple foods (rice, potatoes, etc.) also pose barriers to multinational marketing of food and drink.

Nevertheless, the increasing availability of non-local foods that accompanies global flows of consumer culture means that in some cases, local tastes are becoming more global. Consumers are developing tastes for specific 'American' products sold by multi-national companies that have established brand recognition in the global market. For example, when Taco Bell opened a location in Mexico, customers were disappointed to find that the menu had been altered to be more similar to local cuisine, demanding the more processed, 'American' versions (Pilcher, 2008).

In some cases, global food products, such as palm oil (an ingredient in many processed foods that comes largely from Indonesia) and honey produced in China, are less expensive than locally produced products. Lower costs associated with free trade agreements and government subsidies, bulk production, lower wages for workers, and market loopholes make some globally-sourced ingredients cheaper for producers and consumers alike (Barndt, 2008). Further, the costs of transporting food and drink, especially by air, have been declining and are likely to decline still further with the advent of new massive airplanes (e.g. the Airbus 380) and containerized cargo ships, as well as the emerging 'aerotropoli' and their associated shipping centers (e.g. for FedEx and UPS) (Kasarda and Lindsay, 2011). However, the additional distribution costs of fresh and non-subsidized foods mean that such products are only available to those who can afford them – it is unlikely that they will be affordable for the global lower classes, let alone the global poor, especially the 'bottom billion' (Collier, 2007). When it comes to tastes today, the upper reaches of the global class system have their pick of the very best (and most expensive) of global food and drink and they are also able to dip into the best of the local products. The middle classes will also follow this pattern, although they may consume many globally-sourced foods due to the lower cost at the supermarket. However, the lower classes and especially the global poor will be largely, if not entirely, excluded from this world of consumption,

although many of them will produce that which they themselves will be unable to afford.

The selectivity of the globalization of food and drink is analyzable through the lenses of a series of concepts developed in *The Globalization of Nothing* (Ritzer, 2007). 'Globalization' in this context involves the imposition by powerful nations and their corporations of their food and drink, and even their manner of consuming them, on other, less powerful parts of the world. Among the major examples are the global export of American colas (Coca colonization [Foster, 2008]), breakfast cereals, and fast food (McDonaldization). 'Glocalization' involves the integration of global exports with local practices producing phenomena that combine the global and the local (Robertson, 2001). The term 'glocal' is meant to imply that in the global age it is difficult to find much, if anything, that is not influenced in some way by the global (as well as the local). Culinary traditions that were once uniquely local now incorporate global products, and products and brands that were once considered to be foreign, like American fast food, has been adapted to fit local customs. For example, the McDonald's menu in the Phillipines has been glocalized in that it includes 'McSpaghetti', an item that mimics local cuisine (Watson, 2006). However, it is important to underscore the fact that while the food may at least in some cases be glocalized, the overall systems by which fast food restaurants operate have been globalized: as we see in the case of McDonald's in Israel, the local falafel industry remains a successful competitor, in part because it has taken on many of the characteristics of McDonald's (uniformity, industrial standardization, efficiency, etc.) (Ram, 2010).

Then there are the concepts of *nothing* and *something*. In the case of the concerns of this paper, *nothing* is food and drink that is centrally conceived, centrally controlled and lacking in distinctive content. Coca Cola, Kellogg's Corn Flakes and Big Macs are paradigmatic examples of nothing as the term is used here: their branding, ingredients, and consumption practices are largely the same regardless of the location in which they are consumed, and they carry little, if any, local cultural significance to consumers. In contrast, food and drink that is *something* is that which is indigenously conceived, controlled



and rich and distinctive content. Any food or drink that is truly local in character – produced and consumed in accordance with local traditions – would be categorized as something.

The intersections and interactions of these four concepts (grobal, glocal, something, nothing), really two continua, yield four categories of great relevance to this analysis.

- The first is the *grobalization of nothing* or the export of food and drink that meet the definition of nothing and their imposition on local cultures throughout the world. The significant effect of grobalization of nothing on food and drink is the declining impact of indigenous cultural context: grobal products are part of a global culture and are minimally affected by the nature of local culture (Tomlinson, 2012). Overall, the grobalization of nothing poses significant threats to regional cuisines and local products (Miele & Murdoch, 2007).
- The *grobalization of something* as far as food and drink are concerned involves the exportation of products that meet the definition of something. These are largely local products that have acquired a receptive global audience. Exports such as Parmigiano cheese or Champagne fall into this category and are increasingly found in higher-end shops and liquor stores, especially throughout the global North. These products, which tend to be costly because of high production and shipping costs and relatively low demand, are a much smaller global presence and have an infinitesimal market in comparison to the grobal forms of nothing.
- The *glocalization of nothing* involves glocal food and drink that meet the definition of nothing even though they are produced locally. Examples would be food and drink that, while they are (g)local in character, have been affected by grobal processes and products in terms of how they made, sold, marketed and so forth. Mecca Cola, an alternative to Coca Cola, would be one example, as would mass-produced Jamaican jerk chicken sold in Jamaican restaurants that look much like American fast-food restaurants.

- Finally, the *glocalization of something* would be food and drink that, in spite of being influenced by global processes, continue to be more a reflection of g(local) realities. Examples would be most food and drink that we usually think of as local (for example, British fish and chips, French baguettes), although here they are categorized as glocal because of the increasing impossibility of totally escaping global influences even if they only involve attempts to resist them. The Slow Food movement, founded in Italy and formally established in 1985 when a McDonald's opened in Rome, upholds 'glocal somethings' (foods with rich and distinctive content linked to local culture), and seeks to protect them in the face of increasing global homogenization of food and drink (Sassatelli & Davolio 2010).

All of these combinations of global/glocal and something/nothing co-exist and interpenetrate conceptually (see Ritzer, 2007: 120) as well as in the world today. For example, while the Slow Food movement stands for 'somethingness' and defends the glocal in the face of eradication by global 'nothingness', it has become increasingly global itself as it attempts to push 'slow' products on the global market (Ritzer, 2007: 214). Food and drink virtually everywhere in the world reflect the global influence of these processes and their interpenetration. However, the impact of globalization is differentially distributed and there are places where one or more of these possibilities are absent. For example, all four possibilities are likely to be found in the wealthy areas of the global North, while the globalization of both nothing and something is likely to be virtually absent in the poor areas of the global South. On the one hand, these areas are so poor that they are usually deemed not worth the efforts of the purveyors of the globalization of nothing (the other 75 or so countries in the world that do not have a McDonald's) even though these are generally considered low-priced items in the global North. Of course, to the poor in the global South they are likely to be prohibitively expensive. In many ways the poor in the global South are 'doomed to something' in terms of food and drink; with global forms of nothing largely absent and prohibitively expensive, the 'bottom billion' must eat and drink that which is indigenously conceived, controlled and rich in distinctive content, even as the availability

of these foods is severely limited by climate changes, political unrest, or other factors. While we might think that is desirable in many ways, many of those doomed to something would readily surrender such food and drink in return for more global forms of nothing. At the same time, the food and drink that can be considered global forms of something – generally 'gourmet' products sold in high end stores – are far beyond the budgets of all but the elites in the global South.

The US is the world leader in the creation of various forms of nothing, and it also leads the world in the creation, exportation and imposition of food and drink that meet the definition of nothing. It is no accident that Coca Cola, Kellogg's and McDonald's, as well as the other dominant leaders of the food industry, are American firms. However, there are a number of less visible players such as those involved in giant agribusinesses such as the 30,000 people who work at Archer Daniels Midland. They are devoted to many different aspects of turning agricultural products into products for the home, especially food and drink. The 21,000 employees at Monsanto focus, among other things, on seeds. Conversely, the United States is *not* a leader in the globalization of food and drink that meet the definition of something. While there are certainly high-quality American wines and cheeses, to take two examples, the US still lags far behind countries like France and Italy in these markets. The US certainly has its share of global somethings in food and drink (New Orleans cuisine, various beers from micro-breweries throughout the country), but they are of little consequence on the global market.

The same is true of America's global nothings, for example, the food and drink at most local diners and 'greasy spoons', which consist of generic, industrially-produced ingredients in a distinctly 'American' setting, but lack distinctive cultural content. How do we account for US domination of the globalization of food and drink that meet the definition of nothing? A major factor is the early success of Fordist mass production. The success of Fordism had a wide range of effects, including the industrialization of the production of food (including industrial farming). Huge corporations came to dominate food production through the application of mass production



and assembly-line techniques, the implementation of which was made less costly by subsidies and trade agreements. Producing massive quantities of inexpensive food and drink, these corporations became dominant in the American market and quickly turned their attention to the global market, aided by the creation and eventual global dissemination of supermarkets and superstores (e.g. Wal-Mart and Costco in the US and Carrefour in France), as well as fast food restaurant chains. The spread of these consumption sites expanded the market for American products, at the same time as serving as spaces of globalized consumption aimed to 'Americanize' global shopping habits and popularize the taste for industrialized food and drink. In fact, in Beijing, China, the notion of 'fast food' (including eating manners, environment, social interaction patterns, and the packaging and production of foods) refers specifically to Western chains and its Chinese imitations (Yan, 2008). Rationalization and its associated processes are well-attuned to the production and sale of nothing; conversely they are ill-suited to producing and selling something.

A third force, consumer society, can be thought of as consisting of four basic elements, all of which encourage the consumption of goods that meet the definition: objects of consumption, sites of consumption, the consumption process, and consumers themselves (Ritzer, Goodman and Weidenhoft, 2001).

- First, food and drink exist as *objects* of consumption in all societies whether or not consumer society is a dominant force. However, when consumption defines a society, food and drink become commodities, sold widely and consumed beyond what is necessary for survival. Basic necessities are turned into brands that are made to seem more desirable than non-branded food and drink (Holt, 2004; Arvidsson, 2006). Among other things, this means that a higher price can be charged for them than for their generic competitors. The most successfully branded of these products become objects of conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899/1994). For example, designer waters Perrier (France) and San Pellegrino (Italy), both owned by Nestlé corporation, are popular in expensive American restaurants. As objects of consumption, food and

drink may serve as symbols of class and status, further elevating prices (and potential profits). Organic and 'natural' food products, especially popular amongst wealthier consumers for whom 'eating healthy' is a symbol of status, are part of a wider trend initiated by environmentally-concerned consumers and now part of a hugely successful marketing campaign driven by the same corporations responsible for most of conventional, processed food production in the US (Pollan, 2006).

■ The rise of consumer society is also marked by the proliferation of *sites* of consumption. Shops offering food and drink have existed for thousands of years, but in recent decades the sites involved in the consumption of food have undergone a number of revolutionary developments including the rise of the supermarket and the fast food restaurant. Today, many of the dominant players in the supermarket (Wal-Mart, Koninklijke Ahold, Sainsbury) and fast food restaurant sectors (Yum! brands, which includes KFC and Pizza Hut; Starbucks) have become powerful multi-national corporations. Originating in the United States – and hence major examples of Americanization – these sites have also been globalized, becoming major consumption sites in many other parts of, especially, the developed world. The *sites* of fast food restaurants themselves are an example of the globalization of nothing as is much of the food and drink on offer in them: walking into a Starbucks restaurant in Texas, consumers see similar décor and purchase similar drinks to those purchased in Hong Kong. Marketing familiarity and predictability, global consumption sites have no need to adapt to local tastes and habits, although local businesses may adapt to fit the global model. Consumers in Beijing were found to enjoy dining at Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) not for the food itself, but for the consumption process – the setting, food presentation, and atmosphere of the fast food restaurant: local businesses attempting to compete with KFC failed to a large degree despite the fact that they offered similar, if not identical menus, because they could not compete with the novel setting and environment provided by Western fast food chains (Yan, 2008).

- Third, the consumption *process* itself has changed dramatically as objects and sites of consumption have been globalized. Shopping at 'big box' stores for bulk brand name products differs dramatically from more personalized shopping at a neighborhood grocery store, liquor store, or butcher shop. Eating and drinking at a fast food restaurant, especially if it is done in one's car after leaving the drive-through window, is radically different from a sit-down meal at a traditional restaurant, diner, or pub. These differences, motivated by low prices in the supermarket aisles and convenience foods have their roots in the United States economic system and its emphasis on speed and efficiency. As a result of globalization, as well as Americanization, similar consumption processes are now practiced in many other parts of the world. Thus, it is not just American objects of consumption and consumption sites that have been disseminated around the world, but perhaps more profoundly, they have brought with them a process of obtaining and consuming food and drink.
- In many ways, a new, global type of *consumer* has been brought into being by the changes associated with the rise of consumer society. Today, consumers in the US and across the globe are consuming very different types of food and drink, are doing so in radically different consumption sites, and consuming them in very different ways. There is increasing global similarity not only in the behavior of consumers, but also in their thought processes and even their identities. While no one has consciously globalized or Americanized the global consumer, the export of globalized objects, settings and consumption processes originally conceived in the US has, in effect, globalized the consumers themselves.

The process of rationalization is central to the rapid rise of consumer society and the globalization of food and drink. More specifically, in terms of the four elements of consumption, we have experienced the rationalization of the objects of consumption (the foods and drinks themselves), the consumption process (drive-through windows; self-checkout lines), the sites of consumption (fast food restaurants and supermarkets, in particular), and



the consumer (the 'McConsumer' of food and drink). While McDonaldization often coexists with local tastes and consumption habits, it is also of potential danger to local traditions. Because literally everyone is a consumer of food and drink, their cultural significance is often more susceptible to McDonaldization (and commoditization) than other aspects of the local.

Of particular interest here are the objects; the foods and drinks themselves. First, they are increasingly *efficient* to consume: Chicken McNuggets, prepared meals at the supermarket, microwaveable meals, five-hour energy drinks, juice boxes, bottled water, and so on. Second, food and drink are increasingly *predictable* in the sense that they look and taste the same from one time and place to another time and place. This is particularly true of branded food and drink and fast food sold globally, such as Coca Cola and Starbucks coffees. *Calculability* is most notable in this case because of the 'race to the bottom', whereby suppliers offer large quantities of products at low prices. Supermarkets are well-stocked with large packages and bottles that offer lower prices in comparison to smaller packages and bottles. Warehouse stores like Costco take this to an extreme by offering even larger sizes as well as multi-packs of various products, all intended to attract customers while still guaranteeing a profit for the supplier. Of course, the corporations that produce McDonaldized food and drink exercise great *control* over them so that they are pretty much the same wherever and whenever they are sold. The most important aspect of the McDonaldization thesis in general, and as it applies to food and drink, is the *irrationality of rationality*. Fundamentally, emphasis on the efficiency and predictability of food products and the focus on controlling quantitative factors (price and profit margins) over quality and nutrition fails to take into account local tastes and differences in consumer habits. Tied closely to the globalization of nothing, the McDonaldization of food produces and sells products that are centrally conceived and controlled and lacking in distinctive content, even if they are marketed within different cultural contexts.

Of course, we cannot discuss McDonaldization and consumer society without discussing capitalism, as the vast majority of food and drink are

produced and consumed within global markets dominated by capitalism. While globally influential food and drink could be, and have been, produced in other types of economies (the socialist economies of the Soviet Union and China are examples, although they had notable failures in this regard), today, in part due to free trade agreements, capitalism has no significant competitors when it comes to food production. Under capitalism, food and drink have become commodities, wherever possible low-priced commodities, that can be sold in great volume in much the same form in many different places. While high-priced food and drink are also often commoditized, and there are great profits to be made from them, the relatively small elite market for them means that the large multi-national corporations focus on the low-priced commodities because the potential clientele, and profits, are virtually limitless.

As Marx recognized from the beginning, capitalism is inherently expansionistic. Once it begins to experience limits in the national market it will seek to globalize, more accurately in the terms used here, it will seek to globalize, spreading processes of production and consumption as well as the products themselves far and wide. There are, of course, many examples of this in the realm of food and drink. Beyond the obvious American examples, other successful globalized food and drink include Barilla pasta from Italy, Beck's beer from Germany, Foster's beer from Australia, Fiji bottled water, and so on. Thus, capitalism, especially with the dominance of multi-national corporations, is a force that incessantly pursues and pushes the globalization of food and drink that fit the definition of nothing, regardless of their cultural origins. As we might expect, there is simply far less profit to be earned from the elite consumers of the world able to afford products that can still be classified as something. The global market for food and drink, whether it is something or nothing, is simply too small to interest most multinationals (although they would certainly be of interest to smaller, more capitalistic businesses). Thus, most indigenous street food and drink, as well as local delicacies for the elites, does not attract much interest from the leaders in global capitalism, unless they can be transformed into commodities that can be globalized.

Consumer capitalism, at least through the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has been closely associated with United States; in terms of our interests here, corporations based, at least initially, in the US have been the dominant players in the global food and drink industry. Prior to the end of WW II, most of the focus in capitalism was on production, but in the last half the twentieth century multi-national corporations came to learn increasingly that there was great profit to be made by a focus on consumption in general and of food and drink in particular. US-branded objects of consumption have a long history, including the iconic Campbell's Soup (1869), Heinz Tomato Ketchup (1876), and Oreo Cookies (1912). Of course, other countries have their famous brands, as well. The modern self-service supermarket was created in the United States and dates back to 1916 as does the modern fast food restaurant. Many of the other great innovations, at least in sites of consumption, began in the post WW II era with the McDonald's franchise system beginning in 1955; the first shopping mall food court in 1974; Costco in 1983, and so on. In terms of consumption processes, the first drive-through window was created in 1948 by In-N-Out-Burger and self-checkout began in supermarkets in 1992. It is reasonable to assume that all of the above have profoundly altered the consumption, and the consumer, of food and drink in a variety of significant ways.

This essay has focused on forces that have led to the global homogenization of food and drink – especially multinational brands and fast food restaurants. However, it is important to note that the vast majority of food consumed in the world has seen minimal influence from the changes described above, or has not been affected at all. After all, most food – especially food outside the global North – is derived from local ingredients, and prepared and consumed locally. Much of the global South has little, if any, access to many of the branded food and drink products or outlets that are commonplace in the developed North. In some ways, access to the benefits associated with globalization – conferred mainly on those living in the global North – means access to more products that fit the definition of global nothing. While many in the global South are 'doomed' to the consumption of food and drink that fits the definition of something, the poor of the global North are increasingly



'doomed' to the consumption of cheap, processed foods. That is, those that fit the definition of nothing (both in terms of our arguments and in terms of nutrition) and are available as part of fast food dollar menus and in corner convenience stores in neighborhoods where there are no grocery stores.

If the majority of food in the world is still produced and consumed locally, then why devote so much attention to globalization, Americanization, consumer society, rationalization (and McDonaldisation) and capitalism? First, there are significant barriers to these global forces within the realm of food and drink. Of greatest importance are the local traditions that continue to play a role in, and serve as a barrier to, the consumption of food and drink defined by these global forces. The perishability of much food and drink is another barrier, as is the fact that many products are only produced in limited regions of the world. Because of their ties to the local, when food and drink *are* significantly influenced by global processes it indicates the power of these forces, and the processes we have described have dramatically affected how food and drink are produced, distributed and consumed. In addition, these processes continue to extend their reach and affect the food and drink in those parts of the world as yet largely unaffected by globalization. Food and drink will never be as globalized, as close to the nothing end of the continuum, as Americanized, as commoditized, and as dominated by capitalism as many other products. However, it is safe to say that food and drink will be increasingly affected by these processes. (G)local food and drink will survive, even prosper, but it will coexist in more locales in the world with the homogenized products that result from these processes. Multinational corporations will continue to extend their reach in other ways, as well. For example, they will reach deeper into societies in which they already exist, seeking new populations for their wares. They will certainly continue to focus on young people, especially children, to ensure that future generations consume their food and drink. And as Foucault (1979) would put it, they will continue to seek to dig ever more deeply into peoples' 'souls', making them lifelong (hyper-) consumers and, more specifically, consumers of brand-name forms of nothing.

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